

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 0551

ARA/LA/MRSD O'GRADY PASS SUBSTANCE TO AFL-CIO MCLELLAN

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, ELAB

SUBJECT: GOC NAMES NATIONAL LABOR COORDINATION COMMITTEE

A. SANTIAGO (1974) 7641; B. SANTIAGO (1974) 5256

SUMMARY: LABOR MINISTER ANNOUNCED MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE JAN 22 AND CONVENED GROUP FOR FIRST SESSION FOLLOWING AFTER-NOON. SESSION PRODUCED SHARP EXCHANGE BETWEEN TOP LABOR LEADER EDUARDO RIOS AND MINISTER, WHO REPORTEDLY ALLOWED LITTLE DISCUSSION AND NO CRITICISM OF GOC POSITIONS. PARTICIPATING LABOR LEADERS REACTED STRONGLY. FEELINGS COULD PROVOKE EITHER ISOLATED OR GROUP CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (PDC) RESIGNATIONS FOOM COMMITTEE AND INCREASE OPPOSITION OF ORGANIZED LABOR. END SUMMARY.

1. LABOR MINISTER NICANOR DIAZ ANNOUNCED TO PRESS AFTERNOON JAN 22 TWENTY-TWO MEMBERS OF COORDINATION COMMITTEE WHICH WAS CREATED BY DECREE LAW DEC 1974 (REF A). ELEVEN OF THE 22 ARE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL UNION COMMISSION (COMISION SINDICAL - CS - REF B). SEVEN OTHERS ARE LEADERS OF LEGITIMATE UNIONS WHICH HAVE EXISTED IN CHILE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. REMAINING FOUR HAVE CAUSED SOME CONCERN CSHX ZTL#CIRCLES BECAUSE THEY

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ARE EITHER UNKNOWN TO THEM OR, AS IN CASE OF MARIA EUGENIA

OYARZUN, TOO WELL KNOWN. (OYARZUN IS WELL KNOWN RIGHTWING JOURNALIST WHO HAS NEVER DISPLAYED SYMPATHY WITH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. SHE MAY HAVE BEEN SELECTED ON TENUOUS BASIS OF HER AFFILIATION TO CHILEAN JOURNALIST ASSOCIATION -- COLEGIO DE PERIODISTAS).

2. MINISTER DIAZ CONVENED NEW COMMITTEE FOR FIRST SESSION AFTERNOON JAN 23. AS REPORTED BY SEVERAL PARTICIPANTS, A SURPRISINGLY SHARP EXCHANGE DEVELOPED BETWEEN HIM AND CS PRESIDENT RIOS.

3. REPORTEDLY, RIOS MILDLY CRITICIZED NEWLY ANNOUNCED PROPOSED DECREE LAW ON REFORM SOCIAL STATUTE FOR ENTERPRISE (SEPREPORT). ACCORDING TO OBSERVERS, HE OFFERED SOME SUGGESTIONS IN FORM OF "CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM" AND "BEHIND CLOSED DOORS," IN MANNER SUGGESTED BY MINISTER DIAZ WHEN HE PRESENTED PROPOSAL PREVIOUS DAY. AT ONE POINT MINISTER DIAZ "BANGED FIST ON THE TABLE" AND ASKED RIOS, "SR. RIOS, ARE YOU WITH THIS GOVERNMENT OR AGAINST IT?". RIOS REPLIED THAT HE SUPPORT GOVERNMENT BUT FELT HE MUST REGISTER FEELINGS OF THOSE HE REPRESENTED. DIAZ INTERRUPTED RIOS A SECOND TIME, REPEATED HIS QUESTION, AND DEMANDED A REPLY "IN ONE WORD". ERNESTO VOGEL (PDC, EX-1ST VICE PRES OF CUT) REPORTEDLY CAME TO RIOS ASSISTANCE AND TOLD MINISTER THAT REASONABLE DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE CHILE WOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT PROPOSED DECREE AND ABOUT "IMAGE" OF NEW COMMITTEE, PRESIDED OVER BY A MILITARY MINISTER OF LABOR. DIAZ TOLD VOGEL "TO FORGET ABOUT WHAT THOSE OUTSIDE CHILE MIGHT THINK" AND CLOSED THE DISCUSSION.

4. MINISTER DIAZ LATER ANNOUNCED THAT THE COMMITTEE WOULD MEET REGULARLY TWICE A MONTH UNDER HIS CHAIRMANSHIP. RIOS ASKED IF THIS DECISION PRECLUDED INFORMAL MEETINGS WITHOUT HIS PRESENCE. MINISTER DIAZ REPLIED THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF ALLOWING SUCH MEETINGS AND TOLD THE MEMBERS THEY WOULD ASSEMBLE ONLY UNDER HIS CHAIRMANSHIP.

5. REACTION AMONG TRADE UNION LEADERS WHO PARTICIPATED WAS STRONG. RIOS, WHO IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST MODERATE OF THE GROUP, HAS MENTIONED POSSIBILITY OF RESIGNING. SEVERAL PDC MEMBERS DISCUSSED POSSIBILITY OF SEEKING PARTY MANDATE
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FOR MASS RESIGNATION OF PDC MEMBERS FROM COMMITTEE POSITIONS.

6. COMMENT: AS REPORTED IN REF A, UNTIL THIS CONFRONTATION RIOS HAD BEEN HOPEFUL THAT CREATION OF COMMITTEE WOULD OFFER FORUM THROUGH WHICH LABOR COULD PRESENT AND DISCUSS ITS PROBLEMS WITH GOC. FEW LABOR LEADERS HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENTLY OPTIMISTIC TO THINK THAT MECHANISM WOULD BE ANYTHING MORE THAN INTERIM METHOD FOR HANDLING ISSUES OF MINOR IMPORTANCE.

UNLESS RIGID POSITION TAKEN BY MINISTER DIAZ CHANGES, GOC
MAY PROVOKE SOME FORM OF SEMI-OPEN OPPOSITION FROM DEMOCRATIC
ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZED LABOR.

7. KIND OF COMMAND MENTALITY SHOWN BY LABOR MINISTER AT
MEETING IS NOT LIKELY TO RESULT IN UP-AND-DOWN MOVEMENT OF
IDEAS THAT BOTH LABOR AND GOVERNMENT NEED, AND THAT IS NEEDED
IN OTHER PARTS OF SOCIETY IF GOVERNMENT EXPECTS TO CREATE
NEW SYSTEM THAT WILL ROOT ITSELF AMONG CHILEANS.
POPPER

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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